AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Original) A low molecular weight polyphenylene ether which has a reduced viscosity ($\eta sp/c$), as measured at 30°C in a 0.5g/dl chloroform solution, of 0.04-0.18 dl/g, and a molecular weight distribution of 1.5-2.5.

2. (Original) The low molecular weight polyphenylene ether according to claim 1, wherein the glass transition temperature (Tg) of said polyphenylene ether is represented by the following equation:

$Tg\ (°C) > 600 \times (\eta sp/c) + 105$

3. (Original) A polyphenylene ether powder comprising the low molecular weight polyphenylene ether according to claim 1 or 2.

4. (Original) The polyphenylene ether powder according to claim 3, which has a mean particle size of 5.0-1000μm.

5. (Original) The polyphenylene ether powder according to claim 3, which has a mean particle size of 5.0-500μm.

6. (Original) The polyphenylene ether powder according to claim 3, which has a mean particle size of 5.0-300μm.

7. (Original) The polyphenylene ether powder according to claim 3, which has a mean particle size of 5.0-100μm.

8. (Original) The polyphenylene ether powder according to claim 3, which has substantially no particle having a particle size larger than 1000μm.

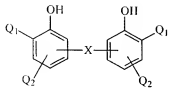
9. (Original) The low molecular weight polyphenylene ether according to claim 1, which is obtained by polymerization of a phenol compound in the presence of a catalyst and oxygen-containing gas.

10. (Original) The low molecular weight polyphenylene ether according to claim 9, wherein the phenol compound comprises a 2,6-dimethylphenol.

11. (Original) The low molecular weight polyphenylene ether according to claim 9, wherein the phenol compound is a mixture comprising 2,6-dimethylphenol and 2,3,6-trimethylphenol.

12. (Original) The low molecular weight polyphenylene ether according to claim 9, wherein the phenol compound is a mixture comprising 2,6-dimethylphenol and 2,6-diphenylphenol.

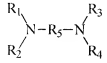
13. (Original) The low molecular weight polyphenylene ether according to any one of claims 10–12, wherein the phenol compound further comprises a bivalent phenol represented by the following formula (1):



(1)

wherein Q_1 and Q_2 each represents either the same or a different substituent and represents hydrogen, an alkyl group, a substituted alkyl group, an aralkyl group, a substituted aralkyl group, an aryl group, a substituted aryl group, an alkoxy group, a substituted alkoxy group or halogen; X represents an aliphatic hydrocarbon residue and derivative thereof, oxygen, sulfur or a sulfonyl group; wherein each combined position of each Q_2 and X is in the ortho or para position with respect to the phenolic hydroxyl group.

14. (Original) The low molecular weight polyphenylene ether according to claim 9, wherein the catalyst comprises a copper compound, a halogen compound and a diamine compound represented by the following formula (2):



(2)

wherein R_1, R_2, R_3 and R_4 each independently represents hydrogen, a linear or branched C_{1-6} alkyl group, with the proviso that they do not represent hydrogen at the same time; and R_5 represents a linear or methyl-branched C_{2-5} alkylene group.

15. (Original) The low molecular weight polyphenylene ether according to claim 14, wherein the catalyst further comprises at least one of a tertiary monoamine compound and a secondary monoamine compound.

16. (**Currently Amended**) A process for producing the low molecular weight polyphenylene ether according to claim 1, which comprises the steps of:

polymerizing a phenol compound in the presence of a catalyst and oxygen-containing gas using a good solvent of said low molecular weight polyphenylene ether; ~~, and~~

adding a poor solvent of said low molecular weight polyphenylene ether to the polyphenylene ether solution obtained by said polymerization ~~to precipitate said low molecular weight polyphenylene ether~~; and

precipitating a low molecular weight polyphenylene ether having a reduced viscosity ($\eta sp/c$), as measured at 30°C in a 0.5g/dl chloroform solution, of 0.04-0.18 dl/g,

wherein said precipitation is carried out at the temperature in the range of –80 to 20°C.

17. (Original) The process according to claim 16, wherein the poor solvent is an alcohol having 1-10 carbon atoms.

18. (Original) The process according to claim 16, wherein the poor solvent is at least one solvent selected from the group consisting of methanol, ethanol, propanol, butanol, pentanol, hexanol and ethylene glycol.

19. (Original) The process according to claim 17 or 18, wherein the poor solvent further comprises water.

20. (**Currently Amended**) A process for producing the low molecular weight polyphenylene ether according to claim 1, which comprises the steps of:

polymerizing a phenol compound in the presence of polymerization solvent, a catalyst and oxygen-containing gas[[,]]; and

precipitating said low molecular weight polyphenylene ether in the course of the polymerization[[;]],

wherein the polymerization solvent is a mixture of at least two alcohols.

21. (Original) The process according to claim 20, wherein the polymerization solvent is a mixture of at least two alcohols having 1-10 carbon atoms.

22. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 20, wherein the polymerization solvent is a mixture of at least two alcohols selected from the group consisting of methanol, ethanol, propanol, butanol, pentanol, hexanol and ethylene glycol.

23. (Original) The process according to claim 16 or 20, which further comprises the step of purifying a slurry comprising the precipitated low molecular weight polyphenylene ether by washing;

wherein the washing solvent is at least one solvent selected from the group consisting of methanol, ethanol, propanol, butanol, pentanol, hexanol and ethylene glycol.

24. (Original) The process according to claim 23, wherein the washing solvent further comprises water.

25. (Original) The process according to claim 23, which further comprises the step of removing the contained solvent from a washed low molecular weight polyphenylene ether by drying and devolatilization.

26 (Original) The process according to claim 16 or 20, which further comprises the steps of separating the low molecular weight polyphenylene ether from a slurry comprising the precipitated low molecular weight polyphenylene ether to obtain a wet low molecular weight polyphenylene ether, and removing the contained solvent from said wet low molecular weight polyphenylene ether by drying and devolatilization.

27. (**NEW**) A low molecular weight polyphenylene ether which has a reduced viscosity ($\eta sp/c$), as measured at 30°C in a 0.5g/dl chloroform solution, of 0.04-0.18 dl/g, and a molecular weight distribution of 1.5-2.5, wherein

said low molecular weight polyphenylene ether is obtained by a process, which comprises the steps of:

polymerizing a phenol compound in the presence of a catalyst and an oxygen-containing gas using a good solvent of said low molecular weight polyphenylene ether;

adding a poor solvent of said low molecular weight polyphenylene ether to the polyphenylene ether solution obtained by said polymerization; and

precipitating a low molecular weight polyphenylene ether at the temperature in the range of - 80 to 20°C.

28. (**NEW**) A low molecular weight polyphenylene ether which has a reduced viscosity (ηsp/c), as measured at 30°C in a 0.5g/dl chloroform solution, of 0.04-0.18 dl/g, and a molecular weight distribution of 1.5-2.5, wherein said low molecular weight polyphenylene ether is obtained by a process, which comprises the steps of:

polymerizing a phenol compound in the presence of polymerization solvent, a catalyst and an oxygen-containing gas; and

precipitating said low molecular weight polyphenylene ether in the course of the polymerization,

wherein the polymerization solvent is a mixture of at least two alcohols.